



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

SEP 30 2016

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 897 without my signature.

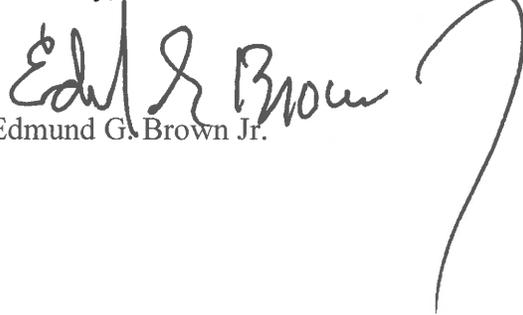
This bill doubles from one to two years special leave benefits for police officers, firefighters, or sheriffs who are disabled by a qualifying catastrophic injury. This leave is required to be provided at full salary and tax-free, resulting in take home pay that is higher than pre-injury wages.

I was concerned when told this bill was prompted by a City of Riverside police officer who nearly lost his health benefits while on temporary disability. In that case, the City chose to extend the officer's benefits. Upon closer review, I have not found any other city which terminates the health benefits of police officers while they are on temporary disability.

As noted in my veto of AB 1451 last year, this disability leave benefit drives up costs significantly. Many local agencies are under significant financial stress. They must consider employee benefit increases in light of competing demands for critical services and long term pension and health care debts.

In light of all this, I believe the decision on how to handle cases such as this is best left to the local jurisdiction.

Sincerely,


Edmund G. Brown Jr.